INDULGENCE TO DISSENTERS IN RELIGION BY Suspending Penal Laws in matters Ecclesiastical IS Destructive both to CHURCH and STATE.

Quid vanæ sine moribus Leges proficiunt?
Horat.

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INDULGENCE TO DISSENTERS, &c.

Is Deſtructive both to

CHURCH and STATE.

IT may juſtly ſeem *ſtrange* to all reaſonable and conſidering men, that thoſe *Perſons*, who for theſe ſundry years laſt paſt have under the pretence of a thorough *Reformation*, but viſibly to their own temporal advantage, endeavoured to bring the good People of this *Nation* into an hatred, as well of the *Eccleſiaſtical Government*, as of the Forms of Gods *publick Worſhip and Service*, by ſo many good Laws heretofore eſtabliſh'd in this Land, and whereunto very many of themſelves had with their own hands formerly *Subſcribed*: ſhould now (inſtead of retracting their *Errors*, returning to

their due *Obedience*, and reducing the People, whom they have hitherto miſled, to a righter underſtanding of their *Duty*) expect to be gratified from the *Church* and *State* (to whom they have done ſo much diſ-ſervice) by condeſcending to all their unreaſonable demands; and that under the pretence of tenderneſs of *Conſcience*.

It had been well if theſe men, before they adventur'd to make their impetuous and confident Applications in this behalf, had duly conſider'd with themſelves,

Firſt, What little regard was had by themſelves, whilſt they were in power, to the Conſciences of ſuch their *Brethren*, as continued ſtedfaſt to their honeſt Principles of *Loyalty* to their undoubted Soveraign, and Obedience to the eſtabliſh'd Laws: expoſing their Perſons to Beggary and contempt; & ſeizing their Poſſeſſions to their own uſe, upon that only account,

Secondly, That if the pretenſion of tenderneſs of Conſcience, and the giving of eaſe and ſatisfaction to ſuch as ſo pretend ſhould be admitted; the one as a ſufficient Plea for ſubjects to warrant their non-obedience to eſtabliſhed Laws; the other, as of it ſelf a ſufficient ground for Governors upon every ſuch pretenſion to change

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and innovate the said Laws; it could not be avoided, but that in a short time all reverence to the Laws would be laid aside, the sinews of Government so slackned, and Soveraign Authority it self grow into such contempt; that Anarchy, confusion and ruine must needs ensue thereupon. For there being the same reason of all Pretenders; whatsoever liberty, Indulgence or concession shall be made, granted or allowed to any one Party or Faction so pretending, the same in all equity ought to be made, granted and allowed to every other Party or Faction (yea even the Papists themselves) that shall pretend the same: whereof how sad the consequent will be, every man who will but suffer himself to be master of his own Reason may easily understand.

Thirdly, In case any farther *Concessions* should be granted them, according to their own desires, by improving this present *Indulgence* into an *Act of Parliament*; what little assurance the *Church* and *State* can have of their future peaceable demeanour and acquiescence in such Concessions: when as his Majesties gracious and unexampled Indulgence towards them, expres'd in his late published *Declaration*, hath been so far from bringing them to

any greater degree of *Moderation* and *Sobriety*, as in all reaſon it ought to have done, that it hath rather (quite contrary to His *Majeſties* pious intentions therein) but added to their obſtinacy and inſolency: as by their petulant expreſſions, and malicious inſinuations from the Pulpit and elſewhere doth too evidently appear.

And indeed whoever conſiders the true ſtate of things, cannot rationally hope it ſhould ever be otherwiſe; it being a certain truth (in which I am inſtructed by a late learned * Author) 'That a bare Indulgence of men in the free exerciſe of any Religion different from the Publick Profeſſion, can lay no obligation upon the Party. Perhaps when the rigour of a Law, under which they have ſmarted a while, is at firſt relaxed, this indeed they may at preſent take for a kindneſs, becauſe 'tis really a favor in compariſon to their former Condition; and therefore as long as the memory of that remains freſh upon their minds, it may poſſibly affect them with ſome grateful Reſentments. But alas! theſe Affections quickly vaniſh, and then what before was favor, is now become juſtice; and their Prince did but reſtore them to their juſt and lawful Rights, when he took off his Tyrannical Laws and Impoſitions from the Conſciences of his beſt

* *Diſcourſe of* Eccl. Policy, p. 166.

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'Subjects. While those unjust Laws were 'in force, he oppres'd and persecuted the 'People of God; and therefore when he 'cancels them, all the kindness he is guilty 'of, is only to repent of his Tyranny and 'Persecution, which is no *favour*, and by 'consequence no *Obligation*.

Thus far that worthy Person; to whose Sentiments herein upon good grounds, I do fully subscribe. For however these men may seem satisfied with this Indulgence, (it being the most advantageous method that can at present be employ'd) yet ere long (if Authority do not interpose) they will effectually convince us; that it is not Indulgence, but a thorough Reformation, *i.e.* as sad experience hath explain'd it, a total extirpation of what ever is contrary to their interest and designs, that each different party endeavours to establish. The Reason of which procedure (as the same * Author informs me) is this fundamental Principle that runs through all their Sects; *That they are bound under pain of Eternal damnation to labour their utmost to establish the Worship of God in its greatest purity and perfection: and withal apprehending that way now establish'd by Law defective and superstitious, they cannot but be bound in Conscience to endeavour its utter ruine and subversion.*

* *Ib.* p. 163.

This is a Point that would bear much enlargement, did I not rather deſire to draw it up briefly into this humble Petition, as it was formerly preſented to His moſt *Excellent Majeſty* and his preſent *Parliament*, that They would pleaſe in their great Wiſdoms to conſider,

* *Toleration diſapprov'd and condemn'd &c.* p. 86.

* Whether it be either *Religion* or *Policy* to *tolerate* thoſe *Perſons* or *Parties*, which are perſwaded in their *Conſciences*, that it is a neceſſary incumbent Duty, not only to hate and deteſt, but alſo by all thoſe ways and methods which they themſelves ſhall think lawful, to weaken, alter, and extirpate the ſetled *Government* of the *Church*? The which *Alteration* what influence it may have upon the *State*, and how *deſtructive* it may prove to his *Majeſties Crown* and *Kingdoms* (I hope it is no breach of the Act of *Oblivion* to remind them) the experience of late *years* hath ſuggeſted a very fatal *conjecture*. It will perhaps be here urg'd (which is the only *Objection* worth our notice, and to which I now deſign a full and ſatisfactory *Anſwer*)

Obj. That, *Man* being a *rational Agent*, acting from a free Principle of *Election*, muſt be dealt with in a rational and moral way, *i.e.* by Perſwaſions and Admonitions; and

and therefore, *say they*, when the *Prelates* and their Agents have employed the best Rhetorick they can to exasperate *Authority* against those who are Dissenters from them; we must then tell them, that it is neither the rigour of *Laws* nor the severity of their *Execution* that can any thing avail them; they have not to deal with *Brutes*, that are driven by force and compulsion; but with *Men*, who have *Consciences* that must be satisfyed in the Legality of their Actings; and therefore it is the most prudent course; first, if they can, to *convince* them in the Spirit of meekness; if not, then leave the success to *God* by taking off the rigour of these *Penal Laws*, which may indeed make men *Formalists* and *Hypocrites*, but can never work a real change upon their hearts, or infuse true *Grace* into the *Soul*. To this I *Answer*;

Ans. That though Man be a rational Agent, and as such is most suitably drawn by Perswasions and Admonitions, yet my Brethren are desired to remember; that there is in *Man* a *Sensitive Faculty* as well as a *Rational*; by the violent and irregular motions of which he is many times hurry'd to such extravagancies, as would not only disturb, but, if not timely prevented, even utterly

utterly subvert all Policy and Order; and therefore, that it is the infinite care and good Providence of God, for the securing of humane Societies, to ordain Principalities and Powers; by whose *Authority* are enacted good Laws and Constitutions, which by Penalties annexed may restrain the wilful violaters of them, who are commonly most led by the sway of their sensual desires, and are usually more afraid of *Sin* for the sensible Evils which follow it amongst men, *i.e.* for the Punishments that are inflicted upon their *Bodies* and *Estates*, than for any kind of sentence that Reason or Religion can pronounce against it.

Indeed were the Precepts of the *Gospel* as duly observ'd as they are generally pretended, or would men be as readily Religious as we can tell them 'tis their Duty to be so; could their *Preachers* as effectually make them *temperate*, *chaste*, and *just*; *honest* and *peaceable*; and obedient to their Superiours; or at least but restrain the contrary exorbitances, as they can shew them a Text of Scripture that requires such demeanours; could this be effected by their sole Admonitions, there were then small need of a coercive Power. But since we live not *in Republicâ Platonis*, but *in face Romuli*; Wherein, what through the

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Corruption of humane nature; the Pride and Prejudice of mens Spirits, the prevailing Interests of some Factions and Parties, the greatest part of the Nation are miserably wanting in their Duty; living in a known disobedience to the Laws both of God and Man. When Atheism, Prophaneness and open Debauchery shall vaunt it on the one hand; when Schism, Faction and Sedition shall insult it on the other hand; when we are under such Circumstances as these, so as it is in vain to think that empty talk should have any strong Operation upon the Wills and Affections of these men, who have thus hardned their foreheads as Brass against all Admonitions; I say things being brought to this pass, what more effectual course can be taken than to call in the help of the Secular Power: in all Humility to implore the aid and Assistance of His most Excellent *Majesty* and the two Houses of *Parliament*, in whose only power it is, next under *God*, to reform these abuses. That they would seriously consider (and I beseech God they may do it before it is too late) the *destructive*, yet natural consequence of this *Indulgence* to Dissenters. For however fair and specious it may be represented (the Devil himself is sometimes transformed into an Angel of Light)

yet

yet there is methinks this following Reflection that should make it irreconcileable to all true Lovers of their *Countrey*.

We cannot as yet be ignorant (which some mens *Interest* would have us to forget) that *three* flourishing *Kingdoms* were lately involv'd in Confusion and Blood: the best constituted *Church* in Christendom Schismatically defac'd; and the best of *Kings* destroyed and murthered by his Rebellious *Subjects*. Now if we may be allow'd to inquire into the Reason of these things, *i. e.* if it be consistent with our Allegiance to prevent the like for the future; what was the true Cause of all this Misery and Confusion?

* *Interest of* England *in matters of Religion* p. 403.

* *Account of Proceedings*, p. 7.

* *The excessive Dominion of the Hierarchy, with the rigorous Imposition of humane Ceremonies was accounted much of the malady of former times, which ended in those deadly Convulsions of Church and State.* * *The strict imposing of the strict use of these Forms was the very thing that disquieted these Nations, taking in the concomitant Ceremonies and* SUBSCRIPTION. But these things are too notoriously known to need any enlargement: their own publick *Declarations, Remonstrances, &c.* are sufficient evidence if occasion shall require.

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And do we not now begin to repeat the ſame *Methods*, by which our ruine was at firſt promoted? are there not tender *Conſciences* to be ſatisfied, *Diſſenters in Religion* to be *eas'd* and *Indulg'd*? which whoever oppoſeth ſhall he not, as formerly, be voted an *Enemy* to His *Majeſties* Intereſt? And then muſt not *evil Counſellors* again be remov'd? by which Arts when a company of factious deſigning men ſhall inſenſibly have tied the hands of the *Loyal Party*, and thereby once more put themſelves into a Capacity; what can we then expect but a thorough Reformation, *i. e.* a total Extirpation both of Monarchy and Epiſcopacy, as ſad experience hath already explain'd it?

Indeed, if Almighty God hath deſign'd us for ruine, (which our ſins and incorrigibleneſs have juſtly deſerv'd) this Method will effectually promote it. But if our *gracious God* have ſtill a favour towards his People; and hath a purpoſe (notwithſtanding our continued Provocations) to lengthen out our Peace and Tranquillity; 'tis very much to be hop'd, nay rationally to be expected, that *Authority* will awaken; and by a vigorous and ſeaſonable execution of Penal Laws, convince all Offenders (both *Proteſtant* and *Papiſt*) that the *Sword is not born in vain*. If this

this courſe be effectually taken, there is yet a well-grounded hope, that both *Church* and *State* may flouriſh as formerly. But if this be neglected I am then afraid (and I beſeech God the event do not juſtifie my fears) That *This ſuſpending of Penal Laws in Matters Eccleſiaſtical is but the beginning of our ſorrows.*

The Reaſon of which ſad apprehenſion is that known ſaying, *Erranti nullus Terminus.* All the Art of man cannot poſſibly foreſee, and conſequently not with any certainty prevent, the multiply'd miſchiefs of this intended Relaxation. *The heart of man is deſperately wicked who can know it?* and there is that Pride, Ambition, Covetouſneſs, Revenge, carnal Intereſt in ſome factious Perſons, that if the Reins of *Diſcipline* be let looſe (which have hitherto reſtrain'd them) what other can be expected but our former *Confuſions*, the natural *Centre* to which theſe things tend?

FINIS.